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## Rainbows and Rationalism

### The Fate of the Terrestrial Manifesto of Art

Reza Negarestani

*[T]he disenchantment of the world understood as a consequence of the process whereby the Enlightenment shattered the 'great chain of being' and defaced the 'book of the world' is a necessary consequence of the coruscating potency of reason, and hence an invigorating vector of intellectual discovery, rather than a calamitous diminishment.*<sup>1</sup>

#### I. Launch your patron into space and watch your world flip.

Aggravated by war, transmuted by capitalism, modulated by liberalism and mustered by globalism, the twenty-first-century art world – that nebulous site for the conflux of artists, artworks, curatorial processes, spectators, institutions, markets, raw materials, labor ... – is determined by its complicated relationship, its complicity, with the Earth as its first and foremost patron. Even the lucrative promiscuity of contemporary art with its political, economic and cultural patrons takes place under the auspices of this unique monogamous relationship. Presiding over the marriage is a certain ineradicable conception of terrestriality which constitutes the horizon of all activities on the planet: Terrestriality is grasped as a continuum of neighboring regions or complex manifolds whose tensions and syntheses fabricate what we know as the earth. As a continuum, this terrestrial horizon has at once local and global expressions. Whilst local expressions of the terrestrial continuum suggest various forms of tensions (transformative, antagonistic, accelerative, inhibitive, etc.) between regional sites, the global expression articulates the synthetic and universal aspect of the continuum that connects and opens the regional to the global. Whilst the regional has its different orders of magnitude – cerebral, individual, social, geopolitical, and even geological regions – the global horizon of terrestriality that marks the ultimate boundaries of such tensions and their syntheses is figured by the body of the Earth. The art world partakes in terrestrial syntheses that traverse this globalized body; at the same time its scope and activities are also determined by tensions between terrestrial regions spanning the entire telluric continuum, from basic inorganic regions of the earth to biological, cultural, socio-

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<sup>1</sup> Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction*, (London: Palgrave, 2007), p. xi.

political and economic regions. Its artistic, curatorial, cultural and commercial perspectives shift according to regional-global tensions and their corresponding syntheses (relations between regional perspectives and the global outside or the open). The more radical these terrestrial tensions in terms of their syntheses, the broader the scope of the art world, the more enlightened and the more deepened its perspectives. But as we shall see, this path of illumination does not follow the lead of planetary myopias or models of lighting rooted in a strict monogamy with the Earth and a restricted conception of terrestriality.

The Earth's global continuum is constituted of infinitesimally fuzzy gradients of regional tensions which are purely synthetic: neuropsychological tensions between the individual and its outside that highlight the de-privatized site of thinking; social tensions that paste the already-synthetic public individual into the social fabric as a site where individual actions and thoughts have no longer exclusive expressions; economic tensions that meticulously glue the geochemical tensions of the inorganic earth to the permeable economies of the organism, society and territory through widespread production, circulation and consumption of minerals, chemical compounds and fuels; (post-)industrial dialectics between the attentive triad man-labor-technology and the inattentive and cosmically indifferent body of the Earth from whose bowels culture and civilization are traumatically conceived; and lastly, modern nations, which dominantly concentrate all the aforementioned regional tensions within their trans-territorial horizons. The earth's patronage for today's art is too unfaithful, its business too shady, its source of funds too untraceable, for the artist not to shed some light on her dependent relationship with it. Likewise, the contemporary art world is unthinkable without a model of enlightenment capable of illuminating its regional sites – its artists, works, nations – as gradations of a profound terrestrial continuum. But such a feat of enlightenment – understood both as a widening of artistic scope and a overdue probe into the subterrain of the art world – first requires the unbinding of a truly universalist conception of the earth in which the regional-global continuum has no ground, center or discrete regional authority, for it is driven by the open. Within the universalist conception of terrestriality, the relationships between regions of the continuum (whether cerebral, social or national) are unrestricted, and ultimately, the patronage of the earth for art is no longer a matter of guardianship or provision but one of delivering art, its visions and problems, without any chaperoning prejudice, to the abyssal depths of the universal continuum.

Accordingly, the universalist and speculative widening of terrestrial syntheses opens a transfinite scope for the artist by illuminating the world of art and its nations as non-discrete yet focalized gradients of the geocosmic continuum, the unbound universal gradient in which one can no longer isolate or capitalize on any region (of thought, the Earth or the Universe) whatsoever. Since regions of the geocosmic continuum are all synthetically interconnected and in complicity with the global expression of the continuum, artistic and philosophical products of the brain are no longer irreproachable: Like any other product, they do not have any fundamentally discrete presence within the reality of the continuum, because they are continually determined,

transformed, and renegotiated by the tensions and syntheses between economic, cultural, biological and even inorganic regional gradients of the global continuum. Consequently, the so-called inner sanctuaries of the senses, emotions and intellect – the sites of artistic creativity – must be regarded as regions nested within the precarious mines of Africa, South America and Asia, gradationally inseparable from the micro-nation of factories and illegal workshops, the amorphous rendezvous points of low wages, chemical fumes and human trafficking systems. In the same vein, the artistic haven of intuition is a part of the neurochemical plasticity of the cerebral *individuum* or the nervous system that has never been (and should never be) withdrawn from everyday explosions and insurgencies in the streets of the earth or the contingently and indifferently distributed cosmic inorganic materials that simultaneously shape, feed and traumatize it. Within the telluric continuum, streets, mines, militarized trenches, the brain and the so-called home are cavernously dug within each other in a manner that is topologically and categorically contingent and counterintuitive. Respectively, the Earth with its undeservedly privileged status and glorified solar patron – the Sun – is already expropriated in the name of the universal public, a Universe in which neither reason nor materiality have a private life of their own or a particular ideal necessity. For this reason, the speculative widening of the art world across the geocosmic continuum, not as a discrete self-centered world but as a synthetic regional gradient of the universal continuum, marks the wedding of universal enlightenment and the artistic vision. At the same time, it is an all-out universalist war (rather than a war of nations) against all leftover and mutated strains of planetary myopia – those cosmetically enhanced variants of the Ptolemaic tradition, capitalism, liberalism and fundamentalism.

## II. To ground control, we hardly see any earth up here.

The restricted conception of terrestriality always recognizes the Earth as a discrete entity that has the final word (or more accurately, *world*) in everything. This axiomatic world on which all thoughts, visions and modes of living must be grounded is not necessarily synonymous with the planet Earth. For it can be one's nation, the interiority of the self, the purported integrity of lineage, the sanctum of artistic intuitions, the site of the intellect or any horizon whose edges fold over onto themselves to form a self-centered sphere, an axiomatic resource of its own verity. Those who are weary of this enveloped world are told to unburden themselves by declaring the Earth as the private property of the Divine, or more constructively, to build a new Earth out of the resources at hand, that is to say, from the axiomatically veritable and discrete Earths of this world: Their individual selves, nations, ancestral lineages, private intuitions and so on. In this world, openness of scope is always circumscribed; syntheses between regions are modally restricted, real alternatives are diminishing insofar as syntheses progressively happen on the basis of capacity and affordability of regions and the fact that each region can now isolate its own veritable earth as the ground of its synthesis (i.e. openness) toward the outside. The earth of illusory alternatives and restricted syntheses is an earth endemically susceptible to the scourge of fundamentalism, which insists on expanding the Divine's franchise to every corner of the Earth

and its regions. It is equally dazzled by the mirage of global openness generated by liberalism's confusion between real alternatives brought about by the universal continuum and affordable options based on regional capacities and economical imperatives. But above all, the world of the discrete earth is the venue of capitalism's global circuitry, switching from one territory to another, from one limit to the next, from the earth of one region to a newer Earth.

Capitalism does not advocate isolated regions per se; indeed, it champions a global continuum of the earth – but one whose frontiers can safely and reliably be determined at any time. What capitalism supports is synthesis between isolated regions and discrete earths so as to simultaneously conform to capacities – that is, affordable confines – of cerebral, social and national regions of the Earth, and appear as the ultimate emancipatory force: 'Our business is to incorporate all secluded regions into a *wholesome* Earth'. In order to carry on its planetary trades, capitalism must prevent the Earth from dissipating out of its manifest global horizon, its discrete self-centered sphere. In short, capitalism must demarcate and determine the boundaries of the universal continuum, for only in a bound continuum can regions be discretely identified, syntheses or methods of openness restricted, and regional capitalization undertaken. Within such a restricted ambit, the transition from the regional to the global does not bespeak of the reality of the universal continuum. It simply denotes a unified concept of the self-centred Earth – the ground control of the artist that prevents her from sighting the universalist picture of her art world which, like the Earth, is not *the* world but an increasingly blurred gradient of the unbound continuum, in infinitesimal complicities with other regional spheres.

The possibility of widening artistic scope by wresting an unbound universal continuum from the current sponsors of planetary myopia rests upon a synthetic transfiguration of the artist: The artist becomes a new participant in the speculative project of enlightenment, alongside science and philosophy. Synthetic illumination begins with modern science's headlong dive into the chasm: Modern science embraces only one necessity, the necessity of an unbound universal continuum absolutely free from the necessity of its particular elements no matter who or what they are. It only acknowledges a reason that does not emanate from the ocular subject to the world, but follows the impersonal course of a generic light. In short, modern science impersonally heralds a boundless universal continuum and in doing so, it contributes to the abolition of privatized, isolationist regions of the world in the name of a public abyss. Disenthralled by the abyssal universe introduced by modern science, philosophy systematically synthesizes all universally expropriated regions of the open into one gradient. Accordingly, it approximates the scope of the universal synthesis for thought as a unified gradient synthesized by alternative and unrestricted modes of openness drawn between regions by the universal line of synthesis or generic light of the open – between the fields of culture, politics, economy, geology, mathematics, etc. The highlighting function of synthetic illumination reaches its greatest intensity when art begins to color the gradients uncovered by modern science and synthetically approximated by philosophy. The artist's chromatic illumination of the universal continuum *not* according to the

will of regions (earthly sponsors, intellectual guardians, and emotionally sanctioned muses) but according to the will of the open – this is the only sweepingly revolutionary, realistic (by any measure or in any sense) and responsible artistic engagement for bringing out the reality of regions / nations – *Color the rainbows of the unbound universe and bringing their regions into focus as its spectra*. Far from restricting the course of light to its own region or becoming the stellar source of it, artistic illuminations should make regions – not only the regions of the art world but also of thoughts, streets and nations – chromatically stand out without any self-imposed distortion or myopia, but in their real, contingent and unrestricted relationships with the universal chasm. This is why even the complex portrayal of the artist as a *multifaceted refractor* who bends regional beams of light through various processes of artistic production so as to converge them upon her work does not satisfactorily present the synthetic figure of the artist as the one who works through and within the generic light of the universe. In this latter figure, the artist brings out the continuity of all nations with the unbound continuum of the abyss, and thereby chromatically highlights all unrestricted syntheses and complicities between regions – between her world, the subterranean workings of mines, the art world, factories, the world of her patron, insurgencies in the streets, low wages, capitalism, fundamentalism, liberalism, oil, water, Dubais and Venices ancient and future.<sup>2</sup>

### III. Back to coloring rainbows and making infinite bows.

*[A]ll dualities disappear, a continuum is looked for, and the cultural web is understood as a complex topological space where all sorts of breaks/sutures of continuity give rise to the most interesting artistic, philosophical and scientific expressions of the epoch.*<sup>3</sup>

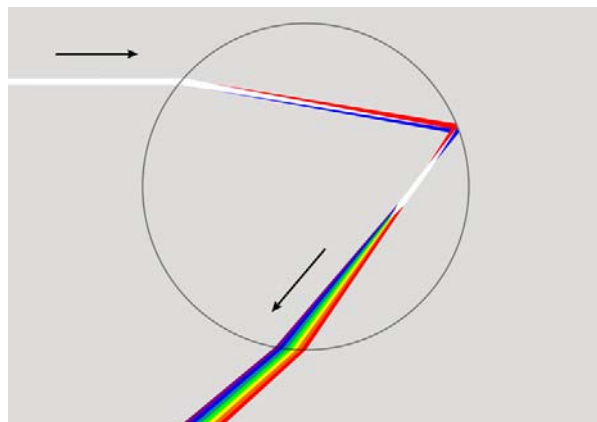
Coloring rainbows is no frivolous task; it is not a matter of glorified whimsicality but of utmost rationality. The synthetic transfiguration of the artist as the *tinter* of universal continuum calls, first of all, for a distinction between the center-sanctifying halos of the glory and the floating universal bridges of the rainbow. Glories are produced by light reflected back toward its source by a cloud of uniformly-sized droplets in such a way that the observer's shadow ('Brocken spectre') appears at the center of the chromatic halo of the glory. But the rationalist light of the universal continuum is destitute of any singular illuminating source. Even stars are merely glorified regions; for the earths they monopolize, they are transient obstacles to universal illumination, or precisely speaking, sources of planetary obsessions. The light of universal continuum and its unbound synthesis is neither diurnal nor nocturnal, for it is shackled neither to stellar luminance nor to planetary dusk. It is a vague and generalized light radically indifferent to day and night; one that,

<sup>2</sup> The synthetic reintegration of the artist indicates, more than ever, the exigency of arts organizations – such as the UK's Urbanomic – that embrace unforeseeable syntheses between philosophers and artists within vistas opened up by scientists, at the same time probing both territorial and intellectual regions for individual and collective entities whose heterogeneities create new topologies of tension and synthesis.

<sup>3</sup> Fernando Zalamea, "Peirce and Latin American Razonabilidad: Forerunners of Transmodernity," in *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*, Vol. 1, (2009), p. 120.

as Tintoretto depicts, breaks and enters of its own accord from asymmetrical cracks it opens in the horizon, or lights it contingently improvises from regional resources – for instance, an oil lamp that outshines the saints. But free even from the divinological source of Tintoretto's lighting, the synthetic light of the universal continuum relinquishes all privileges and privations by transplanting the universal into the regional and inciting modally unrestricted syntheses which drive (*treiben*) the region toward the open. Within the open continuum, the divinological infinity, like any other order of infinity, finds a regional and contingently posited status and for this reason, like any other regional register, it is exteriorized by the positive force of openness – its necessity is revoked by universal contingency. Unlike glories, which are circularly formed by the reflection of light back toward its source, the generalized light of the open is alien to any source of light that reason could be traced back to. It pervades any obstruction against syntheses of the universal light and deflects the centrality of shadows of regional subjects (observers, thinkers, tinters, creators) to the universal continuum and its gradients. Therefore, the synthetic light of the open does not allow universal rings to radially expand around the shadow of the regional subject.

Rainbows glorify neither the subject nor any region of the universe. As the generic light of the universal continuum traverses regional horizons – each a droplet or a crystallized particle open to light – it enters them. Upon entering a regional horizon, the light refracts, bringing into the equation the internal conditions of the region. Once the light reaches the end of the horizon (the back of the droplet), it reflects back. As the light departs the regional droplet, it changes direction once again, indicating a departure from the regional conditions (the composition of the droplet) into the open, and accordingly, the continuation of this synthetic illumination for other regions. This freedom of departure to the open – the way out – illuminated in the regional sphere by the light of the universal synthesis, chromatically reveals the unbound continuity of the regional enclosure with the open, setting highlighted paths for a universal revolution: that is, the possibility of unrestricted syntheses between regional horizons of the universe, reason as an anti-glory and the rational opportunity of recognizing the open as a non-glorious continuum that is free of the centrality of its regions.



The regional sphere and synthetic illumination

As sites of universal revolutions, rainbows become the polychromatic – that is to say, spectrally and panoramically highlighted – open embraces of the universal synthesis between all regions of the world. For this reason, it is important that the artist does not treat rainbows gloriously. Not only does the wave of universal synthesis break and enter on its own, it also follows the specific conditions set by each region or nation of the universe. What is important in pursuing rainbows is that the open reflects onto its universal continuum through its regional spheres in more than one way. In other words, openness is not only the expression of boundlessness but also the expression of modal freedom – that the universal synthesis toward the open takes place in the regional horizon in more than one way. Therefore, the regions of the world can be opened onto each other in modes untrammelled by any regional necessity, national restriction or methodological prejudice. The generic light of the universal synthesis is reflected in the regional sphere not once or twice, but infinitely; and in being so reflected, it creates rainbows of higher orders, rainbows with infinite bows. Rainbows created by second and third reflections of light in a single droplet (viz. rainbows with two and three bows) are rare in nature, as the light begins to grow dimmer and lose its intensity and becomes invisible to the observer. However, it is said that French physicist Félix Billet (1808-1882) observed a rainbow of the nineteenth order with overlapping and separate bows, bows with different angular sizes and eccentric imbrications fanning out in all directions. Following Billet, who called this illuminated twirling blossom of continua the rose (*rose des arcs-en-ciel*), the modally unbound reflection of the universal light within each and every regional horizon creates hyper-roses.

Hyper-roses are the asymptotic expressions of both the boundless universal continuum and the freedom of its line of synthesis, its light. They grow in silent indifference to regional myopias or, as historian Carl Benjamin Boyer noted regarding three-arc'd rainbows, they grow where no one looks for them or sees. The artist enlightened by the synthetic light of the open, for this reason, is the hunter of roses even before being the chromatic highlighter of universal rainbows. Moved by an unanchored earth, committed to the path of anti-glories and devoted to the garden of hyper-roses, the universalist artist knows that the generic light of the open and its line of synthesis can be neither intensified nor separated from its universal backdrop. Such attempts to intensify the generic universal light or separate it are preludes to glorification. But then how is it possible to hunt hyper-roses and color their sprawling syntheses as the expression of an unbound and free universe if the artist cannot see the synthetic bows that grow around her? Here Tintoretto's technique for creating intense and condensed lights which do not grow dim in regional spheres should be adopted as a rational model of paramount importance. Drawing upon a theory of light derived more from general chemistry (medieval theories of ratio, concoction and quantity of qualities) and the turbulent late-scholastic theology than a theory of optics, Tintoretto attained an intense synthetic illumination through an emphasis on the closure of the regional background and the elements of the scene. Only when shadows of regional elements are painted darker, when regional perspectives become extremely focused, when the ratio of regional closure to universal openness increases, is the generic light of the open accentuated, so that it can begin to irrigate



hyper-roses. In order to see the hyper-roses of the generic light, it is imperative to adopt a terminally focused vision with regard to regions of the universe, and to realize the true expression of the regional (whether it is the reality of an artwork or nations) as a closure that should be both integrally and differentially highlighted. It is the just proportion of closure with regard to the outside that brings out and intensifies the will of the open and its unbound syntheses.

The more integral the artist's regional subjectivity, the more intense the light of universal synthesis through the regional enclosure, and the higher order the rainbow that highlights the paths of that region to the open ... the rose twists forth.



A glory



A rainbow